



The Redstart

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Edited by J. W. Handlan

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HAROLD BERGNER NEW PRESIDENT OF THE BROOKS BIRD CLUB

Harold Bergner, of 420 Warwood Avenue, Wheeling, West Virginia was elected President of The Brooks Bird Club for the club's sixth year, at the annual meeting held at Oglebay Park on September 24, 1937. He succeeds Russell West, and becomes the third individual to serve the club in the capacity of leader. He was without opposition for the office and the club unanimously instructed the secretary to cast a ballot for his election.

Miss Carolyn Conrad was re-elected Secretary-Treasurer for her third successive term in that office. She was unopposed for election.

Harold Olsen, of Elm Grove, becomes chairman of the Executive Committee. His name received the highest number of votes cast for five nominees for the committee, a circumstance which automatically designated him as committee chairman. He has served as a member of the committee during the past year. Charles Conrad was re-elected to committee membership and Walter Ammon became a committeeman for the first time as other results of the election.

The three elected members of the executive group themselves will select two other committeemen from the club's active membership to serve with them during the ensuing year. The committee must hold its first meeting within two weeks of the club's annual business meeting.

Other functions of the committee will be to designate an editor for club publications and to submit a working plan for the club for the ensuing year.

Annual reports by retiring President, West, by Miss Conrad, Mr. Conrad and J. W. Handlan were received in the course of the September 24 meeting. The remainder of the time was devoted to a round-table discussion of the club's weaknesses and strengths, possible ways of building membership and other plans for the new year.

Unlike many organizations, the club ends its year with a balance in the treasury! Miss Conrad reported a cash balance on hand of \$82.20, with club dues for the year now payable by active members.

J. W. Handlan,
Wheeling, West Virginia.

VISIT TO HAWK MOUNTAIN IS OUTLINED

A communication from George B. Thorp, of Pittsburgh, prime mover of the informal group of ornithologists known generally as the Pymatuning Group forwards details of a proposed trip by the organization to the world's only Hawk Sanctuary--Hawk Mountain in the Kittatinny Mountains of Pennsylvania. The mimeographed communication reads:

"For many years this range (the Kittatinny Range) has been known as a flyway for hawks and eagles in their fall migration flights and until recently enormous numbers were slaughtered by hunters as they flew over what we now know as Hawk Mountain. Now, thanks to the interest and determination of Mrs. C. N. Edge, Chairman of the Emergency Conservation Committee--with headquarters at 734 Lexington Avenue, New York City--Hawk Mountain is established as a sanctuary to which, during October and December of each year come bird lovers from distances up to hundreds of miles. As to the birds--in each of the seasons of 1936 and 1937 approximately 16,000 raptors were tallied by observers at this point. And, in addition to some fifteen species of hawks and eagles observed there, such rare birds as ravens, wild turkeys and whistling swans have occasionally been seen."

No formal meetings or organized activities are planned for the occasion, the bulletin adds, and individuals who expect to participate in the field trip--which is scheduled for the week end of October 16 and 17--are expected to arrange for their own accommodations. Two addresses of tourist homes are supplied:

"Mrs. Walter M. Koch, Drehersville, P. O. address, Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania; She can accommodate eight or nine in pairs, double beds. Meals may be obtained there also. No rates given but believed to be reasonable.

"Miss Anna Bauscher, Albany, Pennsylvania, operates "The Homestead." She has five single beds and four double. Week-end rates, \$2.50 a person."

"There is also the modest American Hotel at Hamburg, about fifteen miles away and numerous tourist homes at Hamburg and Port Clinton.

"No attempt will be made to hold set meetings, but it is expected that those who attend this outing will fraternize, and meet other Eastern ornithologists, at the sanctuary itself on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning."

A GREAT-HORNED OWL AS A PET

by

Leroy Black

Bubo is dead. Long may Bubo's relatives live! It is a hope that, from this article, others may find an interest in the study and appreciation of Owls-- and that those who do may offset those others who seek to wipe off Bubo from the face of West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

On Wednesday, June 30, 1937, a party started from camp at Lake Terra Alta, West Virginia, to visit Cranesville Swamp a few miles distant. As we drove past a farmhouse, some one called out; "There's an owl!" We stopped and saw that there was an owl--a Great-horned Owl in a wire cage, which hissed and snapped and raised its wings as we approached. A farmer appeared and invited us to look at the rest of his pets, mentioning that there was another owl among them. In another cage we found Bubo.

We asked what he intended doing with the owls. Had he answered, "Kill them"! I think there would have been an "owl-setting-fre" party some night. But he said, "Do you want one"? Every one said "Sure," and our trip was spent figuring how to get Bubo out of the cage without damage to Bubo or to ourselves.

On the return trip we stopped at the farm again and Tommy John crawled under the wire of the cage with a sack and a pair of heavy (not heavy enough for me!) gloves. John put his hand under those fearfully armed feet of Bubo and Bubo perched there as gently as a Frick Park Chickadee. So "we" got Bubo without the usual hair-raising thrills or shedding of blood.

Back at camp in Terra Alta, Bubo was set up on a perch, two straps around his feet, these attached to a five-foot line and this, in turn, attached to the perch. He ate mice, liver, birds and fish. And, from the first, he was not the ferocious creature we had expected he would be. Tommy John took Bubo on his hand several times and nothing happened.

George Thorp came along one day and said: "Bo-o-o!" Bubo winked and blinked and said, "Bu-bu-bu-buuuuu"! And, from that time, his name was definitely recorded as Bubo.

Eventually we saw the place on the owl's leg where the farmer's trap originally had caught Bubo. It had made a deep cut which was full of maggots. The combined opinion of Bubo's friends was to leave the maggots to clean out the wound.

At camp Bubo was closely observed and was the target for a number of interesting pictures. It was noted, for example, that he saw very well in bright sunlight--just the books said he could! For example, he caught baby mice in bright sunlight, leaping down from his three-foot perch and catching and eating the mice as fast as they were released.

One hot day he made an escape. Arriving back from town with heavy straps to make him secure, we witnessed his "take off" from the perch. Bubo went into a tree with Tommy John after him. Bubo went into a larger tree and I climbed this one after him. This progress continued across the swamp, across the lake and from one tree to another.

After alighting in his eighth tree, he tried a bush. While Tommy attracted his attention, I managed to entangle him in the folds of a net and he was a prisoner once more.

When we broke camp, Bubo came back to Frick Park, Pittsburgh, with us. He traveled in a cardboard box with much hissing and flapping, spent the night in a cellar and, next day, was placed on a ten-foot perch at edge of the woods behind the nature museum. A light rope of ten feet or more was attached to his feet and to the pole by a ring which slid up and down the high perch, atop which was a tree branch, placed cross-wise. The length of the rope allowed Bubo to reach several other perches placed in nearby tree.

The owl proved the best "press agent" the Park ever had. People were here virtually all the time, some watching him for hours, waiting for something to happen. The Robins immediately picked on Bubo--and Bubo picked off several Robins. He dived viciously for a cat and, unfortunately, missed his strike. He "caught one end of a Rabbit, but the other end pulled the end Bubo had caught away." He ate mice, moles, preferred rats, liver, beef, crawfish and almost anything else we tried excepting dog food. His only real rages occurred when he was offered prepared dog food. He blew, spluttered and once dived at the place where I had been on one such attempted feeding.

About one month after his arrival at Frick Park, I noticed the claws on one foot beginning to draw up. Bubo and I traveled to the zoo and learned there that he would probably lose his foot, if not his life, as a result of that old trap wound. For days following the wound was bathed and treated and, apparently, healing was started. Then came blow-fly infection, three days in a row, with eggs all over the owl. These were killed and Bubo was brought inside.

It had been more than he could stand, however, and, on August 18, we found him dead beside a half-eaten mole. He has a marked grave and lives in the memory of many of us who became attached to this unusual pet. If there is a moral to this story it is: Don't kill Great-horned Owls and, if you find one with an injured foot, don't let nature take care of it but use peroxide and boric acid.

FIELD NOTES

Hérons and Grebes at Tappan Dam Near Cadiz, Ohio. On September 6, 1937, at Tappan Dam, near Cadiz, Ohio, Mrs. Skaggs and I saw four immature examples of the Little Blue Heron, Florida c. caerulea. These birds were, of course, in the white plumage. Also present were several Great Blue Herons, Ardea h. herodias, and a Pied-bill Grebe, Podilymbus p. podiceps.

Judge John G. Worley, of Cadiz, reported to me that on September 16 he saw several coots, Fulica americana and three Pied-bill Grebes on a small lake which is inside the race track at the Cadiz fairgrounds. The fair was in progress at the time and several thousand people were in the vicinity.

-- Merit B. Skaggs
Cleveland, Ohio.

Pied-Bill Grebe Captured in a Swimming Pool: Mr. Frank Gaydosh, life guard at the Oglebay Park swimming pool, Ohio County, West Virginia, on September 12, 1937, asked me to look at a bird which he had caught in the pool. The bird proved to be an immature Pied-bill Grebe, Podilymbus podiceps, apparently uninjured, in excellent plumage and with well-nourished body. Gaydosh said he had noted the "duck" in the pool, attempted to frighten it away with the usual result that it would dive. The water is exceptionally clear and the progress of the bird under water could be readily detected from the side of the pool, he said. He then entered a vigorous swimming and diving contest in an effort to capture the bird which was finally successful. The pool is 75 x 165 feet and three-feet deep in its most shallow part. He managed to corner the bird at one end of the rectangular pool and grasp it as it attempted to dive once more.

The bird vigorously resented handling as I prepared to take it with me later for disposition and drew blood from my knuckles with its sharp beak. Later in the day, after exhibiting the bird to Jim Handlan, Jr., and some others, to check my identification of it, the bird was freed. Mrs. John Handlan and Miss Sally Fish took it to Lake Avalon, a small artificial pond near Oglebay Park and released it in the water. The bird immediately dived and emerged at the end of the lake, nearly 150 feet distant. It apparently was none the worse for its experience.

-- John W. Handlan
Wheeling, W. Va.

A Partial-Albino Louisiana Water-Thrush: Decker's Creek flows through Morgantown, West Virginia, to join the Monongahela River. Its banks within the corporate limits of Morgantown are covered with shrubs and trees and afford a favorable haunt for many birds, among them the Louisiana Water-Thrush, Seiurus motacilla. This species feeds regularly along the stream and, no doubt, nests there each year.

August 6, 1937, while crossing the Pleasant Street bridge which spans Decker's Creek, the familiar flight notes of the Louisiana Water-Thrush were heard. Glancing in the direction from which the call came, I saw a white bird. It flew above the bridge close enough to me so that I was reasonably sure I was observing a partially-albino Louisiana Water-Thrush. It lowered itself to the stream bank, a bit above the bridge where it was observed at even closer range.

On August 8 what was presumably the same bird was observed again and was carefully watched for some time with 8X binoculars. The tail and underparts were pure white. The back and wings were whitish-gray, very pale, while the head was of darker gray. The light stripes above the eyes showed in conspicuous contrast to the darker colored head. The actions of the bird and its flight, after birds of other species, led us to believe it was a juvenile.

The bird escaped repeated additional efforts to find it for more observation, nor were reports of it made to us by others.

-- I. B. Boggs,
Morgantown, West Virginia.

Some West Virginia Observations of Birds. These are scattered notes of possible interest to West Virginia students of birds.

Accipiter cooperi. Cooper's Hawk. On September 10, 1937, while on the Audubon Trail in Oglebay Park I caught sight of a Cooper's Hawk as it flew from a low perch in trees along the edge of a ravine some twenty yards ahead of me. It flew low up the ravine, beneath the over-hanging trees, but stopped what I had assumed was a flight caused by my appearance on the scene, to dive sharply into low shrubs and weed-cover at a male Towhee which I then saw for the first time. The Towhee made no sound as the birds, pursued and pursuer, passed momentarily from my sight. The hawk then emerged from the undergrowth, its back to me and flying swiftly up the ravine where it was shortly lost to sight. I had no time to use my binoculars but believe the hawk was carrying a bird, presumably the Towhee. The supposition is that the Hawk, sighting me long before I saw it, finally decided to get away from the human intruder on its hunting grounds but was not frightened sufficiently to resist the chance of a meal when the Towhee entered the picture.

I observed what, to me, seemed notably large concentrations of common birds this fall. On September 5, at Keenan, Monroe County, West Virginia, a great number of Nighthawks, Chordeiles minor were observed. The birds were close to the earth in their flight after insects and moved so rapidly it was difficult to count them. I succeeded in counting at least 160 individuals when the entire flock for a time passed overhead in the same direction before individual birds resumed their erratic darting.

On September 17, at Oglebay Park, I counted 149 Chipping Sparrows, Spizella passerina, feeding quietly on a lawn at Oglebay Park, Ohio County, West Virginia.

-- J. W. Handlan
Wheeling, W. Va.

EDITORIAL

A Gift from Maurice Brooks. Mr. Maurice Brooks, of the faculty of West Virginia University, has presented to the library of The Brooks Bird Club a copy of Bulletin No. 12 of the West Virginia State Department of Agriculture, "List of Birds Found in West Virginia," (Charleston, W. Va., 1909) prepared by Dr. Earle A. Brooks, now of Massachusetts. It describes a collection of 331 bird specimens "in the exhibit of the state department of agriculture," representing "193 species and sub-species of West Virginia birds."

This bulletin has long since been out of print and remaining copies had been thought all destroyed in the fire which razed the West Virginia capitol building years ago. Mr. Maurice Brooks recently came into possession of several copies and generously has presented one to the Bird Club.

Another Year in Brooks Bird Club History. This month completes the fifth year of activity of The Brooks Bird Club and this issue of The REDSTART completes the fourth volume of this publication. The first volume (1933-34) included eight issues, only. The three succeeding ones each have included twelve issues.

The Editor owes an apology to members of the organization for the lateness in publication of Nos. 10, 11 and 12 (July, August and September) of the present Volume. His professional schedule has been of a very exacting character during the present summer and "extra-curricular" activities, such as avocational study of birds and the assembling and editing of material for The REDSTART have been very sharply curtailed.

As a suggestion, club members may help The REDSTART'S editor very much, indeed, if they will send him field notes as well as longer articles. There is a tendency to avoid offering for publication any material excepting what the contributors presume to be of especial importance, or concerning an uncommon species. The most humble bit of bird lore, actually, may be found of great interest to some reader or group of readers.

With the fifth volume about to be compiled, it is hoped to be able to assemble field notes and longer articles enough for three to four issues in advance. This will insure prompt publication of the issues of Volume V and relieve the editor of much last-minute search for material.

Preparation of a four-year index and its publication in mimeographed form is a project scheduled for early consideration in this club year.